

## **Metropolitan Homelessness Encampment Task Force**

Tuesday, April 13, 2016  
at Metro Social Services  
800 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North

Present: Lindsey Krinks, Traci Pekovitch, Renee Pratt, Wendell Segroves, Alex Smith, Charlie Strobel, Will Connelly, Phil Duke, Marvin Cox, Liz Allen Fey, John Murphy, Tommy Lynch, Josh Lee, Captain John Drake

Staff Present: Judy Tackett, Karri Simpson

Public: Denis Huey, Trip Hunt, Diane McNamara, Jason Kenyan, Sean Clark, Jennifer Murry, Brett Fleiner, Kate Waide, Hailey Spigner, Cayla Wilson

Meeting started at 9:02 a.m.

### **Approval of Minutes from March 16th**

The minutes from March 30th were approved.

Liz Allen Fey asked what the beliefs are that this task force shares on homelessness and encampments.

Lindsey Krinks stated that it is an important conversation but she doesn't want to talk about beliefs if it can't turn into something concrete that can be emailed to the Mayor for the closing on Ft. Negley this Friday.

Liz Allen Fey stated that this task force was charged with reporting back to the Commission and not take action specifically on Ft. Negley. Staff at Metro Social Services (MSS) is working diligently to work with all individuals remaining at Ft. Negley to find alternative solutions.

Lindsey Krinks excused herself stating that she can't sit around the table and discuss beliefs that won't be turned into action.

Charlie Strobel moved that this task force discuss Ft. Negley at this moment in the meeting. Alex Smith seconded this. This was opened for discussion:

- Liz Allen Fey reiterated that the charge was clear to create recommendations around not a specific encampment but encampments overall.
- Marvin Cox stated that there was a meeting yesterday with the Mayor's Office specifically regarding work with people at Ft. Negley and that work is being done and efforts made to try and connect individuals living at Ft. Negley to resources.
- Tommy Lynch said he volunteered to be on this task force to look at how the city addresses unauthorized camps and recommendations to authorized camps. If this conversation today is going to focus on Ft. Negley specifically, he will need to recuse himself as his job requires certain actions from him.
- John Murphy seconded that there is already a second body that has met for some time around Ft. Negley, meeting most recently yesterday, so having this task force only talk about Ft. Negley would be duplicative.
- Alex Smith stated he was asked to be part of this task force to hope to make a change and change must start at a specific point, which can lead to more options. Ft. Negley is that one point and one

example- the one thing this task force truly needs to show other departments. He would like the task force to spend time coming up with a recommendation around Ft. Negley.

- It was clarified that the meeting around Ft. Negley was an inter-departmental meeting called by Metro; a representative from Ft. Negley was invited and did attend yesterday's meeting.
- Lindsey Krinks stated that there are 15-25 individuals at Ft. Negley with still nowhere to go despite the work of Metro Social Services and Open Table Nashville. At 11 p.m. on Friday night living at Ft. Negley will be illegal for these individuals who have nowhere to go and the task force needs to discuss this.

A motion was made to suspend this discussion and move to the vote on the original motion of discussing Ft. Negley at this moment in this meeting. Per Phil Duke, he, Wendell Segroves, and Tommy Lynch were not allowed to vote; Will Connelly has never been a voting member of this task force and abstained from this vote as well.

The motion was passed to 4-3 that the task force will discuss the current situation at Ft. Negley. Liz Allen Fey excused herself from the meeting and urged the task force to discuss their beliefs at a future meeting.

### **Discussion of Ft. Negley**

Will Connelly gave an update that at 11 p.m. on Friday night the enforcement of the no camping ordinance will go into effect. Metro Police and Parks Police can use their discretion to start enforcing the law on no camping at that time. The Commission, MSS, and many other organizations have been working to connect people to housing options, however 20-30 people who currently remain at Ft. Negley haven't found a permanent housing solution due to the housing crisis in the city. Their only option, at this point, is an emergency shelter bed, which is an option many don't want to/can't take. Will Connelly stated there are beds within the shelter options in Nashville but there are barriers to those beds which are sometimes insurmountable. The shelter system is under capacity most nights, but pets can't be brought into a shelter or a person may have had a traumatic experience at a shelter prior and don't want to go back.

Staff from MSS and Parks will be on site to help move people's belongings on Friday. Storage bins at Greer Stadium are available for the belonging of individuals who go somewhere else that doesn't allow for their property; items will be catalogued and stored. If a person finds permanent housing, Parks staff is working with Public Works to deliver the individuals items to their new residence. Staff can't move a person's personal belongings to another unauthorized camp.

Green Street has agreed to expand to include 10 residents from Ft. Negley. The challenge is now identifying who will have that opportunity and that discussion began last night at Ft. Negley. Room in the Inn has also made guest house beds available to some residents.

Lindsey Krinks was asked and responded about the anticipation that some may refuse to leave Ft. Negley. She does anticipate, that along with advocates standing beside them, several residents will not leave. One of the issues among residents and advocates is they feel Metro isn't being transparent. People understand that it can start at 11 p.m. on Friday but when is Parks actually going to come and remove their homes? People need to know.

Captain John Drake stated that from a Metro Police perspective, they would rather have compliance than enforcement. He will work to find out when Parks Police will come out and send the Commission an email.

Josh Lee, with Metro Legal, stated that from a law enforcement aspect, it isn't typical for police to advertise when enforcement of a law through, with a raid type action, will occur. Enforcement begins at

11 p.m. and Metro asks that everyone take that into account in the making their plans. Whether or not police come out at 11 p.m., that is when enforcement can begin and plans should be made around that.

### **Discussion of Recommendations**

What does a successful conclusion of this task force look like?

Phil Duke stated that being in an encampment is still being homeless. The goal is to end homelessness and encampments are not considered to be permanent housing.

Lindsey Krinks felt that Liz Allen Fey was here to shift the recommendations to beliefs because the task force is running up against making recommendations for land that doesn't exist.

Phil Duke wants to know if Will Connelly thinks that sanctioned encampments should be created; are we in favor of sanctioned camps? Will Connelly said this task force was convened to make recommendations around sanctioned encampments and he is on this task force to provide input. He has tried to be clear on his position throughout his time on the task force. The goal is to end homelessness and he is hesitant to assign work to staff if that work doesn't lead to ending homelessness. When he hears discussion around how sanctioned encampments are needed for people who have no place to go, his impulse is to work to find permanent housing solutions that follow housing-first principles, and he feels that this is what the Commission should be working on.

Wendell Segroves agrees that the Commission should be working on permanent housing solutions.

Charlie Strobel stated that the shelter and encampment system seems to be the place for people on the fringe who have nowhere to go. If the city could address the issue at Ft. Negley and other encampments could just be left be along, than the focus could shift to the affordable housing issue.

Traci Pekovitch stated that there are two tasks at hand but this task force was only charged with one of the two. They all agree that the end goal is permanent housing but the reality is when you are working to move people to where they are going, then you have to meet them where they are at. For the purpose of this task force and moving forward, members don't have to agree that encampments are the end game but that is where they are currently at; the reality is that people are going to move to another place and it is going to be an encampment. This task force is trying to take on a bigger charge than they have the capability of doing. Some people in this room want to work on where people are at now in encampments and others want to work on housing options but for this task force they need to focus on encampments and recommendations around them. Maybe one of the recommendations is that there is value in having two separate task forces- one working on housing options and one on encampments- that can be brought back together in the future.

Lindsey Krinks wants to have a google doc that the entire task force can access, putting their beliefs prior to the next meeting that could serve as a start for the recommendations for the next meeting.

Phil Duke called on Marvin Cox to answer how it would affect the city services to have a sanctioned camp, wanting to know if the city has the resources. Marvin Cox yielded to John Murphy from the Mayor's Office and Josh Lee with Metro Legal. John Murphy said he could look into this and get more information. Josh Lee asked that these services be clarified to specify whether Phil Duke is asking about the services already being budgeted for within Metro or for additional services.

**Public Comment:**

Steve Reiter: He pointed out that Green Street was in noncompliance years ago and people worked to help them be in compliance. His understanding of this task force was that the task force was to work to help some of the current camps be in compliance. It was this task force's job to come up with something and they have fallen short. There is no representative from Ft. Negley and that person should have a voice. What happens in other countries when there is a crisis? They put up tents when in a refugee situation because they work. Tommy Lynch has gone well beyond his job duties to help with this but others need to step up. Megan Barry sat on the Homelessness Commission for years and she understands these issues, she doesn't need a recommendation from this group. It needs to be clear to her that it is up to her to come up with something. Ten million dollars for affordable housing is great but that won't help anyone experiencing homelessness. No one on this task force has ever helped make a camp legal and that is a problem.

Tripp Hunt: He had to stand in front of 25 people last night and tell them they have to leave. They responded with a question he has gotten to many times, "where can we go?" These are people. Of all the camps he has been to, besides Green Street, they are living in the safest and cleanest camp in all of the city and what camp is the city closing? That one. He was there when they started Green Street and they had to fight the city to get that done. Do something, people are suffering. Please help them.

Jason Kenya: He was connected to this community through his church by giving someone a ride home, which turned out to be a home in a tent community. These are good god-fearing people, who are working to get clean and back into housing. He has seen three people get jobs and move on. He talked to someone yesterday who is trying to save money to get a truck for work. Some are afraid to go to the shelters because there is addiction and thieves. They are building tents up on platforms that are insulated; they are building a beautiful community. The community needs to stand with Ft. Negley and find a way to conquer these barriers and get them jobs and places to live.

Samuel Lester: Many of the people at Ft. Negley have nowhere to go. It has been stated and established in the law that it is unconstitutional to drive people out of their camping spaces when they have nowhere to go. This seems like a very simple position for this task force to take. We are dealing with fragile lives. People undergo trauma everyday on the streets and camps provide some sanctuary from that. If the goal of the Commission is to shorten homelessness and eliminate it then we have to find a way to lessen that trauma. You can't legalize sleep unless you legalize places to sleep. He really appreciates everything Tommy Lynch has done to try and intervene with the Parks board. If we say they can't stay on public land then this goes beyond just parks land- can they not stay on the greenways? These are residents of this city, that just don't have homes, and they have the right to use the Parks and city resources should be used to re-stabilize their lives. He has known many people who have gotten out of camps and recreated their lives.

Denis Huey: Let's be real careful what we do here because the rest of the nation is watching Nashville right now to see how we handle this, so let's make sure we are doing this the right way.

Phil Duke said there may not be enough time for public comment next meeting because the task force has a big job ahead of them. Phil Duke went on to say this group has a chance to do something good and he doesn't care who is watching.

The meeting concluded at 10:27 a.m.

The next Encampment Task Force Meeting will be on Wednesday, April 27, at 9 a.m. at Metro Social Services, 800 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue North.